

“SACRAMENTO SCENE” REVIVED

The Office of Governmental Affairs is reviving the “Sacramento Scene” newsletter with this issue. The objective is to publish the “Scene” weekly during the legislative session, and bi-weekly during the legislative interim. Comments and suggestions may be sent to Larry Doyle, Chief Legislative Counsel, at Larry.Doyle@calbar.ca.gov.

STATE BAR FEE BILL APPROVED BY ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

[SB 686](#) by Senate Judiciary Committee Chair [Ellen Corbett](#) (D-San Leandro) was approved, with amendments, by the Assembly Judiciary Committee at its July 10 hearing. The vote on the measure was 9-0, with one abstention.

As approved by the Senate, SB 686 would extend for one year the State Bar’s ability to collect the fees needed to fund its operation. The measure also includes a \$10 three-year Technology Assessment for all active members, which will enable the Bar to make much needed improvements to its technology infrastructure. However, it also would repeal the long-standing Building Fund assessment, thus keeping the fee for active lawyers in 2008 at the current level of \$400.



Corbett

The bill also requires the State Bar to report to the Chairs of the Senate and Assembly Judiciary committees by January 10, 2008, on a number of issues, including its success in fully implementing its strategic plan, the status of the Bar’s Building Fund, whether the Bar has fully complied with issues raised by the State Auditor regarding case processing of disciplinary matters, the Bar’s plan to control Client Security Fund administrative expenses, and whether the Bar has fully complied with its administrative and monitoring responsibilities with respect to the Legal Services Trust Fund Program.

At the request of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, the author accepted a further amendment to make clear that, in addition to providing direct services, attorneys may help to accomplish their pro bono goals, in part, by making financial contributions to legal services organizations when they are unable to actually perform hours of service. Actual amendment language is being developed.

STATE BUDGET STILL UP IN AIR

Although the two-house Budget conference committee completed its deliberations more than a week ago, the adoption of a state spending plan is still some ways from completion. The so-called “Big Five” (Governor [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), Senate President pro Tem [Don Perata](#), Assembly Speaker [Fabian Núñez](#), Senate Republican Leader [Dick Ackerman](#), and Assembly Republican Leader [Mike Villines](#)) met for the first time Monday, July 9, to attempt to forge an acceptable compromise, but so far those meetings have not borne fruit.

The budget plan approved by the conference committee does include several items of importance to the state’s judiciary, including funding for 50 new judgeships in the next two years. The number of judges that actually could be appointed, however, remains contingent on the passage of [AB 159](#) by Assembly Judiciary Committee Chair [Dave Jones](#) (D-Sacramento), which was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee Tuesday, July 10, on a unanimous 5-0 vote – but which still does not specify a number of appointees. The bill also would permit the conversion of 162 subordinate judicial officer (SJO) positions to judgeships at the rate of up to 16 per year, according to specified criteria.



Jones

The Big 5 meetings provide some possibility that important court-related budget items deleted by the conference committee may be revived. These include increased funding for trial court security, a program workload adjustment for new positions at the Administrative Office of the Courts, and reform of Judges Retirement System II.

DEADLINES UPCOMING

- [Friday, July 20](#) - Summer Recess (provided Budget Bill has been enacted).
- [Monday, August 20](#) - Legislature reconvenes from Summer Recess.
- [Friday, August 31](#) - Last day for Fiscal Committees to meet and report bills to Floor.
- [September 3-14](#) - Floor session only. No committee may meet for any purpose.
- [September 7](#) – Last day to amend bills.
- [September 14](#) - Last day for each house to pass bills. Interim recess begins on adjournment.